

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY DUBLIN PRIORITY

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: OEXC, EI

SUBJECT: SMITHSONIAN FOLKLIFE FESTIVAL

REF: DUBLIN 0036

1. SMITHSONIAN VERY DISCOURAGED BY CULTURAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE DECISION. FROM CORRESPONDENCE, HAVE LEARNED THAT FULL DIMENSIONS OF PROPOSED FESTIVAL PRESENTATION WAS NOT COMMUNICATED TO COMMITTEE. POSSIBILITY EXISTS THEY FUNDED SIAMSA TRAVEL BECAUSE THEY KNEW EXACTLY WHAT THAT ENTAILED WHEREAS THEY HAD ONLY NAME OF BOTHY BAND FOR FESTIVAL PRESENTATION.

BOTHY BAND COULD TOUR COMMERCIALY AND RECOUP TRAVEL COSTS FROM EARNINGS BUT RINZLER DISCUSSIONS WITH BAND CENTERED ON THEIR WORKING AS INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE LEADING INSTRUMENTALISTS AS WELL AS GROUP PERFORMANCE.

2. WOULD APPRECIATE EMBASSY EFFORTS TO REOPEN COMMITTEE CONSIDERATION AT HIGHEST LEVEL POSSIBLE, WITH MUCH FULLER KNOWLEDGE OF PROPOSED PARTICIPANTS.

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TOM MUNNELLY UNDERSTOOD TO BE TRANSMITTING PROPOSED

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS TO EMBASSY. THE FOLLOWING ADDITIONAL FACTORS MIGHT ALSO PROMOTE MORE FAVORABLE CONSIDERATION OF SMITHSONIAN INVITATION.

3. IMAGE-MAKING: FESTIVAL PROVIDES EXPOSURE BEFORE 500,000 TOUR OF TWO WEEKS WOULD YIELD ADDITIONAL 100,000 SPECTATORS. AUDIENCES MOSTLY CROSS-SECTION OF U.S. POPULATION BUT WITH IN-DEPTH LINKS TO IRISH/AMERICAN COMMUNITIES IN WASHINGTON AND TOUR CITIES. GOI CAN SUGGEST CITIES TO BE VISITED. BECAUSE OF BICENTENNIAL TIE-IN, EXTRAORDINARY MEDIA COVERAGE LIKELY AT NO COST. SIAMSA TOUR WOULD COMPETE WITH SCHEDULED BICENTENNIAL FUNCTIONS FOR MEDIA ATTENTION AND AUDIENCES WOULD BE LIMITED TO IRISH/AMERICAN COMMUNITIES AND THE CAPACITIES OF HALLS IN WHICH SHOW IS PRESENTED.

4. COSTS: FESTIVAL COSTS LIMITED TO ROUNDTRIP AIRFARE AND LOST WORK-TIME COMPENSATION FOR 25 FOLK ARTISTS WITH INSTRUMENTS, PAYABLE IN POUNDS. SIAMSA TROUPE PRESUMABLY LARGER WITH SETS, COSTUMES, INSTRUMENTS, SOME PUBLICITY MATERIALS TO BE AIRSHIPPED TO U.S. DOLLAR COSTS WOULD LIKELY INCLUDE IMPRESARIO'S COMMISSION AND SOME ADVERTISING, PLUS TRAVEL, FOOD AND LODGING WITHIN U.S. SMITHSONIAN DOUBTS IF BOXOFFICE TAKE WOULD RECOUP MORE THAN LOCAL THEATER RENTAL AND MAINTENANCE PLUS SOME PUBLICITY COSTS.

5. QUALITY: PROFESSIONAL IRISH FOLKLORISTS SELECTING MOST SKILLED INSTRUMENTALISTS, BALLADEERS, SINGING GROUPS, REPRESENTATIVE OF AUTHENTIC TRADITIONS OF MANY COUNTIES OF IRELAND, PLUS BOTHY BAND TO DEMONSTRATE EXCELLENCE OF CONTEMPORARY RESTATEMENTS OF TRADITIONAL FOLK ARTS. SIAMSA ON OTHER HAND (BASED ON FILM RINZLER SAW PLUS COMMENTS FROM OTHERS) REPRESENTS DILUTED RECREATIONS OF SANITIZED CULTURE PATTERNS BY AMATEURS FROM ONE COUNTY ONLY, APPEALING SOLELY TO UNCRITICAL DEVOUT IRISH/AMERICANS WHO WOULD ACCEPT ANYTHING FROM OLD COUNTRY. SIAMSA SEEN LIKELY TO CEMENT STEREOTYPES AND ADD NOTHING TO AMERICAN AWARENESS AND APPRECIATION OF IRELAND'S RICH, FULL-BODIED FOLK CULTURE.
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6. CONCURRENTLY, AMERICAN IRISH BICENTENNIAL COMMITTEE (ETHNIC COORDINATING CULTURAL GROUP) HAS MADE DEMARCHE TO IRISH EMBASSY, WASHINGTON, REQUESTING RECONSIDERATION OF FESTIVAL PARTICIPATION. ITS ARGUMENTS STRESS UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY TO IMPROVE IMAGE, SAYING SMITHSONIAN INVITATION HONORS IRISH AMERICANS AND REPRESENTS "A VERY USEFUL FAVOR TO IRELAND ITSELF." IRISH EMBASSY

UNDERSTOOD TO HAVE TRANSMITTED APPEAL TO DUBLIN WITH
ITS OWN STRONG ENDORSEMENT, URGING REPLY BY FEBRUARY
FIRST AT LATEST. KISSINGER

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